Teddy Bears' Picnic

"**The Teddy Bears' Picnic**" is a song consisting of a melody written in 1907 by American composer John Walter Bratton, and lyrics added in 1932 by Irish songwriter Jimmy Kennedy. It remains popular in Ireland and the United Kingdom as a children's song, having been recorded by numerous artists over the decades. Kennedy lived at Staplegrove Elm and is buried in Staplegrove Church, in Taunton, Somerset, England. Local folklore has it that the small wooded area between the church and Staplegrove Scout Hut was the inspiration for his lyrics.

Background

Sheet Music Sale

(Underprice Basement.)

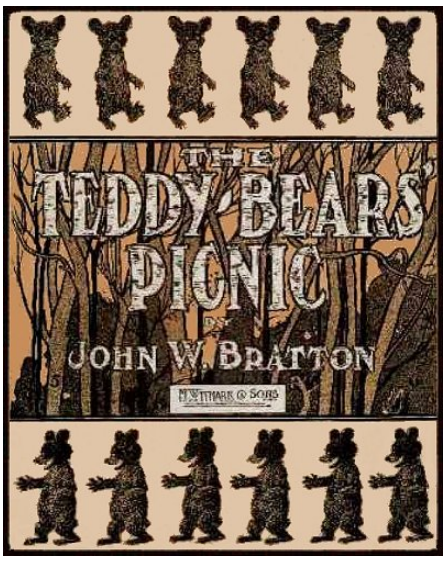
18c—"The Teddy Bears Picnic"—18c

By John W. Brattan, composer of "Laces and Graces," "In a Cozy Corner" and several other popular numbers. This is the greatest characteristique two-step since, and just as big a hit as, the famous "MOSQUITOES PARADE." Another month and the whole country will be playing and whistling "Teddy Bears Picnic."

Advertisement for sheet music of "The Teddy Bears Picnic" as published in the *Star Tribune* newspaper in April 1908

Bratton composed and personally copyrighted it in 1907, and then assigned the copyright to M. Witmark & Sons, New York City, who published it later that year as "The Teddy Bears Picnic: Characteristic Two Step", according to the first page of the published piano score, as well as the orchestral parts Witmark published in an arrangement by Frank Saddler. However, the illustrated sheet music cover gives the title as THE TEDDY BEARS' PICNIC, with apostrophe on "BEARS" and no genre descriptor.[1][2] Irish songwriter Jimmy Kennedy wrote the now familiar lyrics for it in 1932.

"The Teddy Bears' Picnic"



Sheet music cover, 1907

Nursery rhyme	
Published	1907 (instrumental) 1932 (lyrics)
Composer(s)	John Walter Bratton
Lyricist(s)	Jimmy Kennedy

After Bratton wrote "The Teddy Bears' Picnic", however, many people felt that the composer plagiarized portions of the melody. Music aficionados pointed out in particular that the refrain echoed the theme from Robert Browne Hall's 1895 "Death or Glory

March". Nevertheless, charges were not filed and Bratton's song still has the same tune it had in 1907.

The first recording of the piece was by the Edison Symphony Orchestra, made at Edison Records' "New York Recording Department" studio, 79 Fifth Avenue, New York City, in November 1907 and was released as Edison two-minute cylinder 9777 in March 1908, as announced on page 3 of the January 1908 issue of *The Edison Phonograph Monthly* (vol. VI, no. 1).[3][4] Arthur Pryor's Band made the work's first disc recording for the Victor Talking Machine Company in Camden, New Jersey, on 14 September 1908. Take 2 from that session was released in November 1908 as Victor single-faced disc 5594 and as side A of the company's first double-faced disc 16001, with the title on the label reading "The Teddy Bears' Picnic/Descriptive Novelty".[5][6] An early UK recording was made by the Black Diamonds Band for Zonophone records in 1908.

The first vocal version was recorded in 1932 on BBC Radio by Henry Hall with his BBC Orchestra, with Val Rosing singing Kennedy's lyrics. The song has subsequently been recorded by numerous notable artists, including: Rosemary Clooney, Bing Crosby (recorded 22 June 1950),[7] Frank DeVol, Michael Feinstein,[8] Jerry Garcia, John Inman, Jessie Matthews, Anne Murray, and Dave Van Ronk. Notable non-solo artists to record the song include the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Bad Manners, Rosenshontz, and Trout Fishing in America.

Lyrics

> If you go down in the woods today,
> You're sure of a big surprise.
> If you go down in the woods today,
> You'd better go in disguise.
> For every bear that ever there was
> Will gather there for certain because
> Today's the day the teddy bears have their picnic.
>
> Every good little teddy bear
> Is sure of a treat today.
> There's lots of marvelous things to eat
> And wonderful games to play.
> Beneath the trees where nobody sees,
> they'll hide and seek as long as they please
> 'Cause that's the ways the teddy bears have their picnic.

> Picnic time for teddy bears.
> The little teddy bears
> Are having a lovely time today.
> Watch them, catch them unawares
> And see them picnic on their holiday.
> See them gayly gad about.
> They love to play and shout.
> They never have any care.
> At 6 o'clock, their mommies and daddies
> Will take them home to bed,
> Because they're tired, little teddy bears.
>
> If you go down in the woods today,
> You'd better not go alone.
> It's lovely down in the woods today,
> But it's safer to stay at home.
> For every bear that ever there was
> Will gather there for certain because
> Today's the day the teddy bears have their picnic.

Use by BBC radio engineers

The 1932 Henry Hall recording was of especially good quality with a large tonal range. It was used for more than 30 years by BBC audio engineers (up until the early 1960s) to aurally assess the frequency response of audio equipment.[9]

In popular culture

- In the late 1940s and early 1950s, a version performed by organist Ethel Smith was used as the theme song for the *Big Jon and Sparkie* radio program, an American children's show presented on weekdays and Saturday mornings. The Saturday show was later named *No School Today*.
- From the 1966 album "Children's Favourites" sung by Jessie Matthews
- John Inman's 1975 recording of the song (as featured on his first album *Are You Being Served Sir?*) was regularly playlisted on BBC Radio 1/2 Saturday morning children's show *Ed Stewart's Junior Choice* in the late 1970s.

- Excerpts of the song feature in the *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* sequences in the "Boring" episode of *The Young Ones* (Series 1, Episode 3).
- In 1983, Green Tiger Press turned Kennedy's lyrics into a children's book, with illustrations by company co-founder Sandra Darling (under the name Alexandra Day). Original printings included a 7" record, with the Bing Crosby recording on the A side, and a recording by a local klezmer band, dubbed "The Bearcats", on the B-side.
- In an episode of *The Simpsons* (Burns_Verkaufen_der_Kraftwerk), Bart recites part of the lyrics in Moe's bar.
- The song appears in the 2006 film *Open Season*. The original lyrics are sung by Beth and Shaw, and a version with different lyrics is sung by Elliot.
- In 1989, an animated television special titled *The Teddy Bears' Picnic* was released, featuring two teddy bears named Benjamin (voiced by Jonathan Crombie) and Wally (voiced by Stuart Stone) attending the titular picnic while also attempting to reunite a human girl with her own teddy bear, Doc, who had also gone to the picnic. Ann Stevens performed the song, which served as the film's theme song. The cartoon was followed by two further specials called *The Teddy Bears' Christmas* (1992) -which serves as an origin story for how Benjamin and Wally first met- and *The Teddy Bears' Scare* (1998) and later a television series called *The Secret World of Benjamin Bear*.
- The track "Gruntilda's Lair" from the video game *Banjo-Kazooie* is inspired by the melody.[10]
- The semi-final of the 2021 Bake Off: The Professionals (UK; Channel 4) had “Teddy Bear’s Picnic” as the theme for the final ShowPiece Challenge.
- The song was used in a 2021 episode of American animated comedy series Family Guy. It was used in Season 20's fifth episode "Brief Encounter", when Doug sneaks into Stewie's bedroom to "murder" a stuffed monkey named "Chi-Chi" given to him by Lois.
- An upcoming soundtrack from the video game *Dark Deception*, named "Trigger Teddy Picnic", is based on the melody.[11]
- Teddy Bear Picnic was used in Episode 4 of the Mike Meyer Netflix series "The Pentaverate".

References

1. 1st edition copy of piano version at Lilly Library, Indiana University dlib.indiana.edu (http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/inharmony/detail.do?action=detail&fullItemID=/lilly/devincent/LL-SDV-092037)

2. Front cover of the piano score: fedora.dlib.indisna.edu (http://fedora.dlib.indiana.edu/fedora/get/iudl:338274/SCREEN)
3. "TRUESOUND FIRMENDISCOGRAPHIEN" (http://www.truesoundtransfers.de/disco.htm) . *www.truesoundtransfers.de*.
4. archive.org (https://archive.org/details/edisonphonograph06moor) Edison also re-recorded it in June 1909 for four-minute wax Amberol cylinder 255, released in October of that year (as announced in the EPM, vol. VII no. 8, August 1909, p. 20), and reissued that as four-minute celluloid Blue Amberol cylinder 1867 in September 1913 ("Blue Amberol Regular List", EPM, vol. 11 no. 7, July 1913).
5. "Victor matrix B-6405. Teddy bears' picnic / Arthur Pryor's Band - Discography of American Historical Recordings" (http://victor.library.ucsb.edu/index.php/matrix/detail/200007352/B-6405-Teddy_bears_picnic) . *victor.library.ucsb.edu*.
6. "Victor 16001 (Black label (popular) 10-in. double-faced) - Discography of American Historical Recordings" (http://victor.library.ucsb.edu/index.php/object/detail/9827/Victor_16001) . *victor.library.ucsb.edu*.
7. "A Bing Crosby Discography" (http://www.bingmagazine.co.uk/bingmagazine/crosby1bDecca.html) . *BING magazine*. International Club Crosby. Retrieved 13 September 2017.
8. "Pure Imagination" (https://www.amazon.com/Pure-Imagination-Michael-Feinstein/dp/B000002H8V?pldnSite=1) . 21 April 1992 – via Amazon.
9. Ades, David; Bickerdyke, Percy; Holmes, Eric (July 1999). *This England's Book of British Dance Bands*. Cheltenham: This England Books. p. 9. ISBN 0-906324-25-4.
10. "Let's Interview: Banjo-Kazooie and Mario + Rabbids Composer Grant Kirkhope" (https://gamingreinvented.com/interview/lets-interview-banjo-kazooie-and-mario-rabbids-composer-grant-kirkhope/) . 29 January 2018. Retrieved 7 March 2022.
11. Archived at Ghostarchive (https://ghostarchive.org/varchive/youtube/20211205/aC8oR4m83gI) and the Wayback Machine (https://web.archive.org/web/20210508133957/https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aC8oR4m83gI) : "Dark Deception - Trigger Teddy Picnic" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aC8oR4m83gI) . *YouTube*.

External links

- The Teddy Bears' Picnic (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZANKFxrcKU) on YouTube (sung by Val Rosing, 1932)

- The Teddy Bears' Picnic (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IrvkHAxnjzI) on YouTube (sung by Bing Crosby, 1950)